

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
1046 North Ninth Street
Milwaukee
Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-273

HABS
WIS
40-MILWA,
24-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Location: 1046 North Ninth Street (southeast corner North Ninth Street and West Highland Avenue), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Present Owner and Occupant: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Statement of Significance: Trinity is the mother church of Lutheranism in Milwaukee, its congregation having been organized in 1847. The fabric is a beautifully preserved example of Victorian Gothic design, and the woodwork on the interior is without question the most handsome in a Milwaukee church.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ceremonies on July 7, 1878, marked the laying of the cornerstone, and Trinity Lutheran was consecrated April 11, 1880. Cost of the church, including all furnishings, glass, and organ, was \$43,500.
2. Architect: Frederick Velguth, Milwaukee
3. Original and subsequent owners: The structure was built for and has always belonged to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.
4. Builders and suppliers: Carl (Charles) Bussack (Buzack, Busack), brick and stone work; Valentine Mandt (Mand), carpentry; Louis Biersach and August Niedermeyer, slate roof and galvanized iron; Jobst Buening, ironwork; Julius Bruss (Brust) and William Wollaeger, pulpit, altar, stairways, and other wooden furnishings; William Willer, organ casing, wainscot, parapet of organ loft; Peter Petersen (Peterson), painting; Friedrich W. Wehle, altar paintings; William Schuelke (Schulke), organ; William E. Goodman, gas fixtures and lighting; Jansen and Schubert, Chicago, frescoes; and G. Misch, Chicago, stained glass. The four-faced clock in the north tower is said to have been manufactured in Howard, New York, and the three bells in Troy, New York.

5. Alterations and additions: There have been only two important changes in the fabric: c. 1919-20, a wood and glass partition was installed at the west end of the auditorium to create a vestibule, and in 1961, the basement was remodelled and modernized. Responsible for the latter project were Fred Wegner, church member, and the Dahlman Construction Co. Recent minor alterations have included the various improvements--among them, installation of a new slate roof--undertaken to mark the congregation's ninetieth anniversary in 1937; renovation of the interior--including new electrical fixtures and new carpeting--in 1942; repair of the organ and purchase of floor candelabra in 1947; redecoration of the auditorium, replacement of the wiring, repairs to the organ, and tuck-pointing of the exterior, all carried out in 1957; and installation of the chancel light in May, 1968.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

In 1967 Trinity Lutheran was designated a Milwaukee Landmark by the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Inspection of the fabric, August 9 and 14 and December 29, 1968.

Interviews with Pastor Erwin G. Tieman and Mrs. Betty Oskola, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, August 9, 14, and 19, 1968.

Mueller, P. G. "One Hundred Twenty Years of Trinity Church's History Compiled in Chronological Sequence," MS, 1966, in the possession of Mr. Mueller.

2. Secondary and published sources:

"Brevities," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 27, 1879, 8.

"Corner Stone Laid," Milwaukee Sentinel, July 8, 1878, 8.

Foelsch, Charles B. "Landmark Churches of Our Faith; Trinity Lutheran Church, Milwaukee," The Lutheran Brotherhood Bond, XXXIII (October, 1956), 5.

History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Chicago, 1881, 921-924.

Link, David E. "Churches Preserve Design Heritage," Milwaukee Sentinel, December 19, 1964, Section 2, 2.

Lochner, Friedrich. Geschichte der Evang. - Luth. Dreieinigkeits-Gemeinde U.A.C. zu Milwaukee, Wis., Milwaukee, 1897.

Milwaukee City Directory, 1878, 1879, 1880.

"New Church Edifice," Milwaukee Sentinel, May 1, 1878, 8.

100th Anniversary, Trinity Lutheran Church, 1847-1947, Milwaukee, 1947.

Pagel, Mary Ellen and Palmer, Virginia A. Guides to Historic Milwaukee: Kilbourntown Walking Tour. Milwaukee: 1967, 10, 11.

Perrin, Richard W. E. The Architecture of Wisconsin. Madison: 1967, 81.

Perrin, Richard W. E. "Milwaukee Landmarks; Part I, Churches," Lore, XV (Fall, 1965), 132, 133-134.

Sprengeler, Heinrich. Geschichte der Evang. - Luth. Dreieinigkeits-Gemeinde U.A.C. zu Milwaukee, Wis., Milwaukee, 1922.

"Victorian Gothic Styling is Featured in Milwaukee Landmark," Milwaukee Journal, July 16, 1967, Part 7, 18-19.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Trinity Church is a highly decorative and vigorous example of the Victorian Gothic style. The interior is notable for the broad spaciousness of its vaulted auditorium and for the extraordinarily fine craftsmanship of its wooden trim, fittings, and furnishings. Particularly remarkable are the sweeping staircase in the north tower, the organ casing, the lofty, canopied pulpit, the altarpiece, and the doors.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent. Trinity is one of the few nineteenth-century Milwaukee churches to survive to the present almost unchanged.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Width of nave 55 feet; width at transepts 89 feet; total length 145 feet; height of

north spire 200 feet; south spire 128 feet; height of nave ceiling 54 feet.

2. Foundations: Limestone
 3. Wall construction, finish and color: Cream-colored Milwaukee common brick. It is now weathered to mottled charcoal grey. The church office building is trimmed with matching brick and cream-colored Illinois sandstone.
 4. Chimneys: None
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are six doors. The main entrances, vertically panelled and handsomely ornamented double doors, are set in recessed, Gothic-arched portals in the two towers of the west (front) elevation. There is a Gothic-arched double door in the west wall of each transept, and there are small doors in the north and the south walls of the apse on the lower (basement) level. All six doors are oak and are original.
 - b. Windows: The basement windows have Tudor arches with bricked-in tympana; the remainder of these windows are filled with glass block. All windows of the main level are original. There are simply designed, colored glass windows in the nave and transepts. Lancet windows with wooden mullions and tracery depict Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Above the altar is a round window of Jesus and the children.
 6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The steeply pitched gable roofs intersect at the transepts, at a point marked by a small pinnacle. Spires are located at the northwest and southwest corners. The roof covering is slate (not original).
 - b. Framing: Timber
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans: Trinity has a cruciform plan with a polygonal apse. The two western portals open into the vestibule created c. 1919-20, and in the northwest corner of the vestibule is the staircase leading to the

balcony-organ loft, and the north tower. A small room in the southwest corner of the balcony level contains the organ motor. East of the vestibule on the main level is the cruciform, vaulted space of the nave and the vaulted chancel. Flanking the chancel at north and south are two diminutive chambers: the guild room and the sacristy, respectively. The remodelled lower level houses church school and meeting rooms, rest rooms, and, in the east (apse) end, kitchen facilities.

2. Stairways:

- a. In the north tower, to the balcony and tower and spire
- b. In the northwest, joining vestibule and lower level
- c. In the southeast, joining sacristy and lower level

3. Flooring: On the main level and balcony the wood-framed wood floors are largely carpeted.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: It is painted plaster except for a wood and glass partition below the balcony at the western end of the auditorium. The nave, transepts, and chancel are vaulted. The present color scheme is not original.

5. Doorways and doors: Oak; on main and balcony levels, original.

6. Special decorative features, trim, cabinet work: The ornamental trim is of oak and ash, with a natural finish. All original trim, fittings, and furnishings survive.

7. Hardware: The original bronze hardware is still in use.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: City steam heat
- b. Lighting: Originally gas, now electric throughout

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: Facing west, Trinity stands on a site which slopes up toward the west and is bordered on the north by West Highland Avenue, on the west by North Ninth Street, and on the south by a parking lot. Though not elaborately landscaped, the grounds with their grassy slopes and old trees are attractive and well-maintained.

2. Outbuildings: Just south of the church stands the former parsonage, now the church office building. This nineteenth-century structure was remodelled in 1968.

Prepared by Mary Ellen Wietczykowski
1111 North Astor Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
December 29, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1969 Milwaukee Project which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission of the City of Milwaukee, Richard W. E. Perrin, Chairman. The project was done under the direction of James C. Massey, then Chief of HABS, and the team members included architect John N. DeHaas, Jr. (Montana State University), Project Supervisor, Mary Ellen Wietczykowski--now Mary Ellen Young--(Milwaukee Landmarks Commission), Project Historian, and student architects Larry Hermsen (Iowa State University), Roger Little (Kansas University), Thomas Sanford (Washington State University), and Donna Woodrum (Virginia Polytechnic Institute). The data was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS editors Carolyn R. Heath, Mary Farrell, Candace Reed and Philip Hamp. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack Boucher.